

Max Feat or The Snows of Kilimanjaro



TOP



KILIMANJARO

What every well-dressed man should wear on Kilimanjaro
The final peak from 14,000 ft.

First glimpse of the eternal snows
801 Ground crew at 18,600 ft. without oxygen

MAX FEAT *or* THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO

THEY SAID there had never been anything quite like *Bulwark's* world cruise. In its very early days when the first firm list of places to be visited was published, there was much poring over charts and maps, and the romantic possibilities seemed unbounded. One of the last ports of call was to be Mombasa, and only a hundred or so miles inland was what appealed perhaps the most to the imaginations of a few: a mountain, Kilimanjaro, rising 19,565 ft. from lion and elephant country, to a peak of ice and snow. The world's second highest single mountain was, in fact, within striking distance.

The party chosen was a typical cross-section of a front line squadron; two pilots, two pilot's mates, a chief air artificer and a petty officer electrician, and, with temporary squadron identity, one of the ship's met. officers. The working-up period included two gruelling week-end hikes through the jungle of Ceylon, and many hundreds of dog-watch flight deck circuits. Much correspondence was exchanged with the local mountain club and the two hotels which usually organise climbing safaris. Reluctantly, they agreed that the party should dispense with the usual native guides and porters, but with the inference that the chances of success were slight.

The grey light of dawn on 9th July found the expedition at Moshi, a small town at the mountain's foot, having travelled overnight by train from Mombasa. Four hours later, after a magnificent breakfast at the base hotel, the ascent commenced in earnest.

Native women in vivid colours stopped to stare at the strange sight - Bwanas carrying huge rucsacs festooned with cameras, water-bottles and sleeping-bags and, as height was gained, the road changed to a track for carts and oxen, and finally to a narrow path. By midday the highest dwellings and cultivated patches of maize and bananas had been left behind and the rain forest entered. Massive branches overhead blotted out the sunlight and an eerie silence descended. Anxious eyes scanned the trees in the dim green light for a sign of a leopard, but they must have been having a day off.

By late afternoon the Bismarck Hut was reached at 9,000 ft., the first of three shelters on the mountain which provide basic sleeping accommodation in the form of wooden bunks. After a superb supper of steak and onions from the ten-man survival packs carried in every ship, no time was lost in turning in.

Shortly after sunrise the trail was resumed, and after an hour's struggle with the steep upper slopes of the rain forest, open grassland was reached. The view was breath-taking. Stark and clear in the cool morning air were Kibo and Mawenzi, the twin peaks of Kilimanjaro, 19,565 ft. and 17,300 ft. high respectively. Separated by a saddle some ten miles long, they towered above, snow-covered, majestic, and infinitely remote.

Climbing gradually over rough grass and heather, Peter's Hut was reached at a height of 12,500 ft. by mid-afternoon and, feeling fit, the decision was made to press on. Sunset found the party sitting round a roaring fire of heather roots dug out of the ground with an ice-axe and drinking numerous brews of tea and hot lime-juice. As the icy fingers of night stole over the mountain-side, all spare clothing was donned and sleeping-bags sought.

Came the dawn! Boots and water-bottles were frozen solidly and the ground was white with frost, soon to be dispelled, however, by the glorious warmth of the sun rising over Mawenzi. This, the third day on the mountain, saw the effects of altitude becoming more pronounced, so that frequent rests were required, and it was with relief that the saddle between the two peaks was gained at a height of 14,500 ft., leaving a gentle ascent to the Kibo Hut at the foot of the final summit.

Call the hands was at 2 a.m. the next morning, as the plan called for the final climb to the summit and a descent half-way down the mountain in the day, and by 3 a.m. the party was stumbling by torchlight up the steep scree-covered slopes. This was the testing time! Every two paces forward meant a slide of one pace back and, as altitude was gained, mountain sickness became a very real problem. Severe headaches, light-headedness and physical sickness were all experienced; but despite these trials, the sight of the sunrise behind Mawenzi was an unforgettable experience and encouraged the stragglers to further efforts. Though the spirit was willing, however, at 18,500 ft., the party was reduced to four, the old men of the party, incidentally, who had just sufficient energy left to overcome the last snow slopes to the summit and to sign their names in a small book kept for the purpose in a watertight box.

For one glorious hour the highest point in Africa was theirs. This was the culmination of four days' sweat and toil, of blistered feet and sunburned faces. Conversation seemed sacrilegious as each sat and drank in the stupendous views across the ice-filled crater and beyond, across the plains of Africa to Mount Kenya, two hundred miles away.

The descent seemed interminable. Headaches and nausea vanished with increasing air density, to be replaced with an overwhelming weariness. The tiredest climbers spent the night at the Kibo Hut once more, leaving well before dawn to rejoin the others at Peter's Hut just in time for breakfast.

At sunset a weary but triumphant party arrived at the hotel. In five days, seventy miles had been covered and 15,000 ft. ascended and descended.

The peak was covered by dense cloud, but somewhere above, nearly four miles up, a little flag was flying bearing the crest of 801 Squadron and, of course, an umbrella for the Met. officer.

NOT FOR "MEN ONLY"

PERHAPS ONE of the greatest drawbacks the Navy has to contend with is that, although brilliant ideas for new and better weapons and equipment are always available, production is so slow that before the Navy has even seen its latest addition, that edition is already obsolete. We in aircraft carriers see this only too clearly, for it is in the field of Naval Aviation that this lag is most apparent. Now I have an idea that is just a little ahead of its time, but in general we are loth to make progress, and this suggestion, something which is bound to come eventually will at the present be laughed off as frivolous. I would suggest that those to whom this suggestion seems so are either living in the past, or else they can be described as a particular type of minority bachelor. How this suggestion is received is really beside the point, but if it is accepted then the Royal Navy would be way ahead of the Army and the R.A.F. and the envy of all contemporary navies.

I consider that we should have women at sea. In support of this I intend to tabulate all the factors involved so that you can appreciate how I reached this wonderful conclusion.

Advantages

1. Women are paid less than men.
2. Certain work done on board ship is work for which women have an aptitude—e.g., typing, cooking, nursing, stewardessing, signalling and, especially, voice communications. This list is not exhaustive.
3. Most women have voices which on a telephone or a voice circuit sound rather glamorous and at the same time carry much better than a male voice. Naval communications would benefit if women were used on all voice circuits.
4. If it became policy to enroll wives in the Navy, marriage allowance would not need to be paid. Items (1) and (4) would add up to a considerable saving for the Treasury.
5. Little requirement would exist for "runs ashore," hence ships could be fully operational at sea for long periods.
6. Recruiting would jump and, until the other Services got in on the act, the Navy would be able to have the choice of the youth of the country.
7. Few men would want to go outside.
8. Britons were a seafaring race, but the spirit of adventure seems to be dying. Under the new naval structure we would re-create a race of Seadogs literally able to be referred to as "Sons of seacooks "



"A small beginning"

Disadvantages

9. Accommodation is about the biggest problem. Ships' companies would have to be smaller, and ships slightly modified to provide a large number of tiny cabins suitable for two. Even smaller cabins would be needed for the single girls, but the men could continue to live on a mess-deck in order to preserve some of the old order of life at sea. Everyone, I am sure, would be prepared to work so much harder in return for the new privilege, and so in fact ship's companies could be cut down.
10. The relative rank of husband and wife would lead to some disciplinary difficulties, but the amusement provided at the Commander's table would be quite rewarding.
11. Commissions would need to be shortened to about six months, but as most of the time would be spent at sea the commission would still be about equivalent to the present nine months' foreign part of a Home (?) commission.
12. An alternative to (1) would be to have several hospital ships specially fitted for maternity purposes, and carrying a complement of spare women to tide the ship over the three crucial months half-way through the commission.
13. Where would the children go? My suggestion here is for a large number of married quarters near the Home Port and a number of large children's homes. When serving ashore, each couple would be allocated a married quarter and their children would come home. At the same time all female Naval personnel would be required to work part time in the Naval Children's Homes.
14. It would perhaps be difficult to have a balanced ship's company. For a start, however, boats' crews, R.Ps., bosun's mates, Q.Ms. and side boys, writers, telephone exchange watch-keepers, cooks, stores assistant communication

ratings and stewards could be replaced by Wrens. On the Air side I am certain that pilots quite prefer their pilot's mates to be feminine. All the above added together leaves a preponderance of men, but I am sure that women electricians and worriers stokers would be quite in order (except as E.R.As.' mates in welded ships). Only for the Royal Marines would it not be possible, as the guard would otherwise look too irregular along the front.

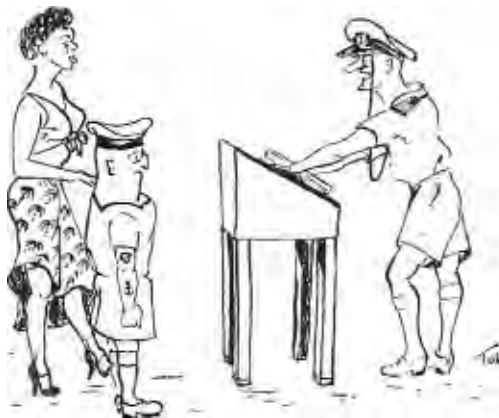
Regulations

Obviously Q.Rs. would need certain modifications. One or two suggested rules are :

- (a) It be a Captain's request to change girl-friends.
- (b) Couples to be in the same watch, or not in the same watch ? I have thought about this and I really do not know the answer.
- (c) Drafting to be in pairs—i.e.,
Captain.
Captain's wife and employed as Captain's secretary.
Lieutenant Y
Lieutenant Y's girl-friend and employed as pilot's mate.
.R.A. X
E.R.A. X's wife and employed as black-smith's mate.

I don't think it is necessary to write more. You will all see the possibilities and all of you will realise how practical the suggestion is.

To any of you who may be hovering I will say only this, bearing in mind that there were women at the Battle of Trafalgar: "If it was good enough for Nelson it's good enough for me."



"Stowaway ?? —but we left Trinidad in February"

"Let's go for a quiet sail," he said

A DAY OUT AT TRINCO

HE APPROACHED ME after lunch just as I was thinking about a nice little nap. I had an idea what he was after by the way he introduced the subject.

"Been up on top lately ?"

"Quite a nice clay. Good steady wind blowing. It should be a splendid afternoon for a quiet little sail. Want to come ?"

"No, thank you; I'm just about to have a ziz."

"What! on a day like this?"

"Mmmm."

"Come on."

"Oh, go away! I'm far too worn out to want to lug lots of dirty heavy gear down an insecure Jacob's ladder into a bucking, heaving dinghy, only to find the boat full of water and no bailer, half the shackles' missing, and a jittery officer of the watch who insists on three reefs, and keep within half a mile of the ship."

"I don't mean *that* sort of sail," he said. "I thought maybe you might like to come out in the *Fairey Fox*. The Captain asked me to find a crew."

"Now that is *quite* different," I replied. "Why the hell didn't you say so before ?"

So I missed my little after-dinner sleep, and half an hour later found myself speeding inshore in the Captain's motor boat to where *Fairey Fox* was lying peacefully on a mooring. There ap-

peared to be five of us in addition to the Captain, which seemed to me at the time rather a lot of people for a crew. However, we all climbed into the *Fox* and were soon busy bending; on sails.

I found two foresails in the sailbag, so I selected the small one (the wind was blowing about 20 knots) and began to bend it on.

"Let's have the large Genny today," said the Captain.

I now understood the need for a crew of six, and looking round I observed that the wind was only 20 knots between the gusts. In the gusts it seemed more like 25. I bent on the large Genoa.

The boat took about five minutes to rig. Then we shifted into bathing trunks and put all our other clothes, shoes and watches into the motor boat. It soon dawned on me that this wasn't going to be such a quiet little sail as I imagined. The Captain had a mischievous twinkle in his eye as he took the helm and we cast off.

"We'll beat up to the top of the bay and then see how fast we can plane back," were his words.

I found myself with a canvas belt round my waist being instructed how to sit out on the trapeze. This seemed dreadfully dangerous and consisted of standing with one's foot on the outside of the boat supported by a wire from the top of the mast which was hooked onto the belt. The spring

on the hook had long since broken, so the wire could unhook itself only too easily, as I soon found out. The water was meant to be full of sharks, so I kept my thumb firmly on the hook and hoped for the best.

As soon as the wind caught us we were off like a bat out of hell and I lay right out on the trapeze with my head a couple of feet above the waves. Suddenly, for no reason my feel lost contact with the boat, and I swung round the other trapeze artist, to land with a bump on the foredeck.

Everybody thought this was terribly funny and they all roared with laughter as I struggled to get back again. I soon got the knack of keeping my feet spaced wide apart and kept my balance fairly well after that. Once or twice I thought we were for it when water gushed into the cockpit, but she stayed upright and in no time at all we were in the quiet water at the top of the bay. Here we tacked, and in the confusion of changing over sides and getting disentangled from the trapeze a heavy gust of wind hit us and there was a horrible moment as we all sat on the gunwale and watched the water pour in over the lee side until she rolled so far that I fell off into the water, followed by all the others.

Nobody seemed very disturbed by this calamity except me, but then I had been brought up on pusser's dinghies, and there *is* rather a difference.

"Stand on the plate!" yelled the helmsman, and soon the boat righted herself and sailed off with people scrambling in from both sides. I darned nearly got left behind and just grabbed the transom as it shot by, and struggled aboard.

"Splendid, first class!" shouted our skipper. "That's the best capsize we've ever had," and to me, "If you go over on the lee side, don't land in the sail or the fellers standing on the plate won't be able to right her. If she turns turtle, of course, the centreboard falls back into its slot and then we really have had it."

There was about six inches of water in the boat, and we emptied this out with buckets before attempting our record run. Then we turned off the wind and in a moment she was up on the plane and going like the clappers. The skipper was standing up in the stern laughing, and shouting, "We're *quite* out of control now. Hold on!"

Soon after there was a *gynormous* crack, and the tiller came away in his hand, broken clean in two.

This looked like the end for a bit, but soon someone produced a hank of codline and the two broken bits were tied together in a most expert fashion.

By now the motor boat had arrived with our tame water-skier and we went round the back of Sober Island, where he tried his paces. Once or twice he got going very well, but it wasn't long before another big gust hit us and over she went again.

This time I was still attached to my trapeze, so I hadn't much option but to go with the boat. I landed in the water up by the crosstrees, and quickly detached myself to swim round to the other side. But the boat went right upside down, so we all clambered on top and sat there.

The Commander, who had been counting heads, suddenly yelled, "Hi! where's the Captain? Anyone seen the Captain?"

A muffled voice from beneath his feet replied, "Ha, Ha, ha! Anyone seen the Commander!"

His object, as we soon discovered, was to push the centreboard down and thus give us something to pull on and right the boat. This we did and the boat came up again, complete with the Captain, who was still laughing. A few moments' pause while we bailed some of the water out, and then we were off on the plane again, complete with water-skier behind.

Then we left our exhausted skier with the motor boat and began a wonderful plane two miles back to the ship, where we hardly dropped below 15 knots the whole way.

Just off the cruiser's moorings something or other went wrong, and for a third time that afternoon we were swimming in the water with the boat upside down beside us. To our agitation, all the small power boats in the vicinity altered course towards us and we had the greatest difficulty in waving them off. We showed them how to right the boat *our* way and a few moments later we were off again, overhauling the fastest of them. This time we had lost the bailer, so we couldn't show off in quite the way we wished to; however, we waved good-bye, with our noses rather in the air, and were feeling rather pleased with ourselves, when—"CRACK!"

The mast, the sails, spars, rigging, the *lot*, disappeared over the side, and we sat there looking rather foolish in our suddenly denuded craft while everything trailed astern, leaving a bare six-foot pole where our mast had been.

Our skipper was far more concerned with where we were going to find a new bit of timber for the mast than with our immediate predicament. However, we reluctantly accepted a tow and arrived back on our moorings looking a little undignified, as by this time one of the flaps on the transom had come off and we had filled up with water again.

I clambered up the gangway with an armful of shrouds, halliards and mast fittings, feeling a bit like I do after a vicious game of rigger. All the same, it was a jolly good quiet sail. J. T.



"You're the submariner—you take over!"

" IT'S ALL IN THE MIND, YOU KNOW "

By SUB-LIEUTENANT WILKINSON and LIEUTENANT HESSEY

Conception

On a cold, wet December night in Pembrokeshire an idea was mated with several pickled brains. The result of the union was good, since it occurred in the wardroom bar at R.N.A.S. Brawdy. A group of officers of 801 Squadron were discussing sundry sultry topics (those who know Brawdy will realise that little more can be done on a cold, wet December night in Pembrokeshire), when it was decided it might be advantageous to have an extra pilot in the Squadron. A pilot was required who would riot take a share of the precious flying hours or accommodation space, but could be relied upon to take his turn at ship-board duties and whose wine bill could be used by those who had exceeded their own. Thus, Acting Sub-Lieutenant Francis Lambert Barrington was conceived.

*

Birth and Childhood

It was decided that Francis, as he was to become affectionately known, was born on 1st April, 1936, in Dublin. His early home life was unhappy (not surprisingly in view of his parentage), and his childhood was spent with his aunt, Miss I. P. Daly, Who taught him to serve his fellow men above all things, to be moderate, and to eschew wine, women and all the good things in life. These teachings he could forget as and when necessary to others. To implement his better qualities he joined the Navy in January, 1955, on a short service commission, and was promoted Acting Sub-Lieutenant (S.L.) (P.) in October, 1957. The child was now ready for manhood.

Maturity

Francis joined H.M.S. *Bulwark* in January, 1958, for pilot duties in 801 Squadron. The fact that his records showed no previous training caused no concern, possibly owing to the fact that at least eleven other pilots, at that time in the Squadron, were suspected of having joined the ship similarly handicapped.

Although a keen pilot, Francis was unable to fly on the trip out to the West Indies, due to a succession of strange maladies. However, on arrival he miraculously recovered and managed to combine a heavy social programme with his duties on hoard. His name was rarely missing from the list for any party of merit, and when lucky enough to be chosen he could always be persuaded to give up his place to a friend. On these and on other occasions, he was usually dispensing the duties of Assistant Duty Departmental Officer; a nebulous task well befitted to such a nebulous character.

Whilst the Squadron was flying when the ship was at sea in the West Indies, Francis seemed to spend most of his time either in small ships in company, or on Commando exercises ashore with the Royal Marines. (His field camouflage was so good they never knew he was with them.)

By the time the ship left Halifax he was a well-known and well-loved member of the wardroom. A large number of officers were convinced they had seen him and, strangely enough, their descriptions were always of a short, tubby fellow. Although he was never on hand when required, his Squadron officers could be relied upon to take any message for him. Unfortunately a number of officers in the ship were becomingly urgently desirous of an interview with Francis. The Pay Office had not received his pay documents and their signals to Brawdy produced a denial of any knowledge of him. The Captain's Office were also perturbed to find that his name did not appear in the Navy List. Worst of all, the principal Medical Officer who had been pursuing him for some months, issued an ultimatum to the effect that if Francis did not appear for his annual aircrew medical and various vaccinations and inoculations, in accordance with A.F.O. 2608/56, his name would be submitted to the Captain.

Under the weight of officialdom Francis's days were numbered.

Death

In the face of these troubles the creators of Francis held an emergency meeting. Although his friends were prepared to fulfil his more pressing duties and might even have attempted to pass a medical on his behalf, the thought of an extra series of "jabs" horrified even those for whom he had done so much.

Thus Francis was called upon to make the supreme sacrifice, and on the night of 21st March, at the tender age of 21, laid down his life for his friends and slipped quietly over the side into the cold Atlantic Ocean.

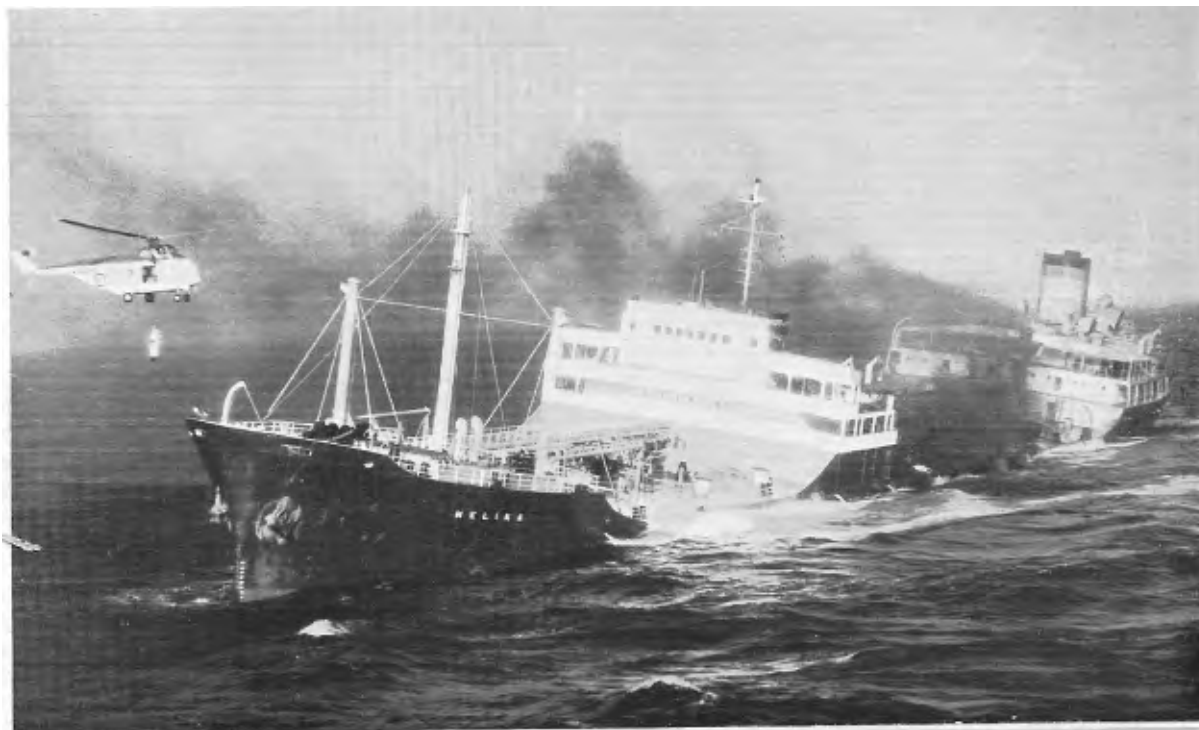
Obituary

It is fitting that Francis's memory was honoured the following day at the bar (his birthplace) by all those whom he had served and plagued.

His spirit has departed but his memory will remain. What few service documents he possessed are still preserved and his next-of-kin card still resides at Admiralty. He had served his Squadron well.

Never was so much done for so many by a figment of the imagination.

Tanker Tow



Lt.-Cdr. P. Dane boards "Melika" . . . "Bulwark" tows, "Puma" steers . . . and so to safe anchorage.

TANKER TOW

JUST BEFORE 0700 011 Saturday, 13th September, distress traffic concerning survivors was intercepted. One of the ships, the tanker *Anglian Diligence*, was asked for a situation report, and at 0718 *Bulwark* received the following signal from her:

"At 122215Z approx. Liberian tanker *Melika* and the French tanker *Fernand Gilabert* collision. Both ablaze and abandoned, several vessels in position picking up survivors, and *Ceres* in communication with Colombo who is sending aircraft with doctor for various injured."

Bulwark was at this time exercising with the frigate *Loch Killisport* in the Gulf of Oman. The position of the collision was approx. 2145 N., 5940 E., about 150 miles from *Bulwark*. *Bulwark* recovered the aircraft which were airborne, except for one Skyraider, and proceeded at 23 knots towards the collision area, telling *Loch Killisport* to follow at her best speed. The Skyraider was sent to search in the reported position of the collision. The frigates *Puma* and *St. Brides Bay*, who were in the area, were ordered to proceed to the scene of the collision. The cruiser H.M.S. *Sheffield* signalled her intention of joining the search, but later decided that she was not required and proceeded for Bahrein.

Skyraider 426 reached the scene of the collision at about 0840. She saw one burning tanker with oil slick stretching about fifteen miles up-wind. This tanker was on fire forward, was belching black smoke and was down by the bow. She could not be identified. In the area searching were the Swedish tankers *Ceres* and *Sira* and the British tankers *Anglian Diligence* and *Border Hunter*. *Sira* was seen to have a lifeboat alongside. An up-turned lifeboat with two lifebelts and a lifejacket on top were sighted. The Skyraider saw no sign of the second tanker.

During the forenoon *Sira* reported she had only two corpses on board and expressed her intention of continuing her voyage. The other three tankers had all picked up survivors, some burned and injured, and were asked to steam to the north to close *Bulwark* so that helicopters could fly medical aid to them. A relief Skyraider identified the burning tanker as the *Fernand Gilabert*. From the rescuing ships it was learned that *Melika* had had a crew of 45 and *Fernand Gilabert* a crew of 40. *Ceres* picked up 20 of the *Fernand Gilabert*, *Border Hunter* 3 of the *Fernand Gilabert* and *Anglian Diligence* 30 of the *Melika* and 9 of the *Fernand Gilabert*.

Just before midday *Bulwark*'s two doctors were flown ahead by helicopters of 845 Squadron to give medical aid to the casualties in the rescue ships. At about 1300 *Bulwark* joined company with *Ceres*, *Anglian Diligence* and *Border Hunter*. The ships steamed southwards in what was almost a formed body, while helicopters of 845 Squadron ferried the injured from each ship to *Bulwark*. Two other helicopters ferried the *Bulwark*'s Executive Officer, Commander R. H. H. Brunner, Royal Navy, and a small fire-fighting team to the *Fernand Gilabert*,

which was about twelve miles away to the east. This team immediately set about getting the fires under control.

Reports from the rescue ships and from the survivors indicated that after the collision *Melika* had, although abandoned, continued to steam south. When last seen, at about 0600, she was stopped and burning. At 1400 a searching Skyraider reported *Melika* on fire and listing over in a position twenty-five miles to the south of *Bulwark*. Having embarked the injured, *Bulwark* continued southwards to pass close to *Melika*, which was blazing amidships. A party under the command of Lieutenant-Commander P. P. R. Dane, Royal Navy, was lowered from helicopters of 845 Squadron on to the forecastle of the burning ship. First on board was Lieutenant D. P. ("Weary") Weil, Royal Australian Navy, of Brisbane, Australia.

Bulwark steamed towards Masira Island to fly off three helicopters and a Skyraider to take the seriously injured survivors to the R.A.F. Station at Masira. The Skyraider acted as a navigational shepherd for the three helicopters. The injured landed at Masira were later flown to Bahrein by the R.A.F.

While the injured were on their way to Masira, *Bulwark* steamed back to join H.M.S. *Puma*, who had arrived to stand by *Melika*. *Puma* had managed to put a party on to the after end of *Melika*. It was just possible but highly dangerous to go from one end to the other, as every few seconds the roll of the ship caused the flames to leap right across from port to starboard. *Puma*'s boat brought a small portable pump over and this was in action against a big fire in the stores aft. At this time a report was received from Commander Brunner in *Fernand Gilabert* that all fires had been extinguished and that the frigates *Loch Killisport* and *St. Brides Bay* were standing by her.

During the first watch *Bulwark* attempted to pass a tow to *Melika*. A moderate swell was running, causing *Melika* to roll heavily. Amidships the fires were still burning. Boatwork was extremely difficult, and while passing a rope from *Melika* to *Bulwark* the seaboard was caught under the carrier's stern. Two in the boat were injured.

Shortly after 0100 on Sunday, 14th September, the first attempt to pass a tow was abandoned as *Bulwark* had drifted into a difficult downwind position. As soon as all the lines had been recovered a second attempt was made. The Captain positioned *Bulwark* by approaching close alongside *Melika*'s port side, stopping with *Bulwark*'s stern just clear of *Melika*'s bow but upwind of her as we, being higher out of the water, would drift faster. The engines were used as required to keep *Bulwark* parallel with the derelict and move a little closer or a little farther away. The Captain coned his ship from the after end of the flight deck, passing orders to the bridge through a specially rigged telephone wire. The second attempt was almost successful, the five-and-a-half-inch wire being within three inches of the securing point on

TANKER TOW



Boiler-cleaning on "Melika"
Replenishment by helicopter

Survivors being transferred to "Bulwark"
Lt.-Cdr. Dane as Master of "Melika"

Melika's forecastle when *Bulwark's* starboard engine which was overheating badly, had to be moved ahead to avoid it being seized up. This surge ahead, unexpected in *Melika*, parted the light tackles holding the wire. Efforts were then postponed and *Puma* and *Bulwark* steamed up and down near *Melika* till daylight.

At about sunset on Saturday *St. Brides Bay* had managed to take *Fernand Gilabert* in tow by the stern, and attempted to steer for the shelter of Ras al Hadd. Towing this damaged tanker was extremely difficult owing to the weather, the relative sizes of the two ships, and the rudder action of the tanker's damaged bows. Little progress had been made when at 0240 the tow parted. *St. Brides Bay* suffered some damage during the towing operations, both her boats being put out of action. When the tow parted, *Fernand Gilabert* was thirty-five miles to the east of Ras al Hadd. Adrift, the wind caused her to travel north-east at about two knots.

At 0630 *Bulwark* closed *Melika* to transfer breakfast to those on board her. It was then observed that only one small fire remained. Later it was learned that this fire was considered a safety valve for an oil tank which was occasionally covered by the sea, and that, without it, the mixture of vapour and air might have become explosive. Soon after 0800 a renewed attempt was made to pass a tow. Coston gun lines were used to establish contact and the manila was soon across. While the towing wire was being hauled over, *Bulwark's* stern drifted onto the bow of *Melika*. *Melika's* bow was slightly pushed back and a hole was cut in the carrier's side above the quarterdeck. On the quarterdeck this was a very tense moment and an axe was raised ready to sever the towing wire, as it looked as if we would have to cut adrift. A short time later, as the very heavy wire was paid out, the turns on a bollard jammed. Everyone was cleared off the quarterdeck as it looked as if the wire would part. However, the strain came off and the wire once again became manageable. After only fifty minutes from the time of the Coston gun line being fired the tow was secured



Passing of the tow



Sighting of "Fernand Gilabert"—the other one!

ready to proceed. Progress was very slow in the sea conditions prevailing. *Melika* yawed very badly. At 1220 the tow parted. In *Bulwark* spirits fell a little. Many of the ship's company had worked for much of the night and again all forenoon, and some were very tired. The Captain had had very little sleep. It was in a way as well that the weather was too bad just then for further towing efforts, for it enabled the sailors to rest.

Loch Killisport reported that during the forenoon the weather was unsuitable for passing a tow to *Fernand Gilabert*, but that they hoped to raise steam in her. During the afternoon *Bulwark* left *Melika* to steam north towards *Fernand Gilabert* to transfer to her, by helicopter, some engine-room personnel. From the time that the fires in each ship were under control, engine-room and electrical personnel set to work to raise power. Electricity was soon available in each and progress was made towards raising steam.

By the morning of Monday, 15th, the wind had dropped to force 4, and the sea and swell were moderating. *St. Brides Bay* had left *Fernand Gilabert* and joined *Bulwark*. *Bulwark* spent the forenoon refuelling from the R.F.A. *Wave Knight*, at the same time preparing again to tow, this time using the largest wire in the ship, a six-and-a-half-inch.

During the forenoon *Loch Killisport* reported that she had successfully taken *Fernand Gilabert* in tow and that they were proceeding towards Karachi at three knots. Progress had been made towards raising steam and hopes were high that eventually *Fernand Gilabert's* own engines might help towards getting her back to port.

In the afternoon *Bulwark* stationed herself again on *Melika's* port bow and passed the six-and-a-half-inch wire across. Shortly before 1600, *Bulwark* commenced to tow, but again it seemed that *Melika* would yaw badly. *Puma* attached her starboard cable by wire to the tanker's stern to act as a rudder. A very slow turn to starboard was made and the tow pointed in the direction of Karachi, 350 miles away. It was soon seen that the swell from her quarter was putting a serious stress on the weakened midship section of *Melika* and that